

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1 and 8 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An instrument-panel mounting system for mounting an instrument panel to the body of an automotive vehicle, said system comprising:

[[an]] the instrument panel having at least one base panel with at least one aperture defined therethrough and adapted to be aligned with a corresponding aperture on the vehicle body;

a threaded fastener received in [said aligned apertures defined through said base panel and the vehicle body] said apertures defined through said base panel and the vehicle body when aligned and adapted to generate a clamping force to mount said instrument panel to the vehicle body; and

a clamping sheet disposed between said base panel and the vehicle body, said clamping sheet including an aperture defined therethrough and aligned with [said aligned apertures defined through said base panel and the vehicle body] said apertures defined through said base panel and the vehicle body when aligned, said clamping sheet including a strut defined about the periphery of said aperture defined through said clamping sheet and extending in the general direction of the clamping force generated by said fastener, said strut acting to distribute said clamping force through said clamping sheet and the vehicle body.

2. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said fastener includes a bolt having a head that clampingly engages said base panel and said strut to generate the clamping force, the clamping force extending through said base panel and said clamping sheet to mount said instrument panel to the vehicle body.

3. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 2, wherein said strut extends axially through said aperture defined through said base panel and into contact with said head of said bolt.

4. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 2, wherein the vehicle body includes a body panel and a body superstructure, the clamping force extending between said head of said bolt and said superstructure.

5. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 4, wherein said fastener includes a threaded shaft that threadingly engages said superstructure to generate the clamping force extending between said head of said bolt and said superstructure.

6. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said aperture defined through said clamping sheet defines a space between said clamping sheet and said fastener.

7. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said aperture defined through said base panel defines a space between said base panel and said strut.

8. (Currently Amended) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim [[1]] 2, wherein said strut extends substantially perpendicular with respect to said head of said bolt in the general direction of the clamping force generated by said fastener.

9. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said strut integrally extends from said clamping sheet.

10. (Original) An instrument-panel mounting system as set forth in claim 1, wherein said clamping sheet is made of either one of steel and metal.